

Women Deserve Comprehensive Immigration Reform

November 8, 2013

Dear Colleague,

We thank you for your efforts to address our nation's outdated immigration laws and policies. As immigration reform moves forward in the House of Representatives, we must be mindful of the important role of immigrant women and their contributions to our communities and families. Women comprise the majority – 51% – of the immigrant population. These hard-working women are the drivers of assimilation; they encourage their families to learn English, succeed in school and business, pursue naturalization, and fulfill their civic responsibilities. As such, it is essential that immigration reform affords women – the backbones of their families and communities – equitable and meaningful opportunities to participate in our nation's health care system.

Under immigration reform, women aspiring to become citizens will increasingly contribute to government revenue as taxpayers. Immigrant women and families should have the same opportunities as their friends and neighbors to contribute to and participate in our nation's health care system. By allowing immigrant women to participate in the health care system, they will be able to pursue a variety of economic avenues, like opening up a new business and providing health care to their employees, pursuing educational opportunities, and ensuring the health and success of their families. For an immigrant woman, being able to protect her health and care for her family is the first step to full social, economic, and civic assimilation into the American community.

When immigrant women and families don't have health coverage, the need for medical attention does not go away. Immigrant women without health insurance may either delay treatment for a preventable disease, leading to higher costs and greater suffering, or seek care through under-resourced and expensive emergency systems. This undermines opportunity for women, weakens financial stability for families, and increases health costs for all of us.

Immigrant women on the road to citizenship are committed to working and raising their families in America. They should have the same responsibilities and supports as other Americans. Doing so will improve the health of immigrant women and families, and improve their ability to more fully contribute to our workplaces, communities, and national economy.

We thank you for your time and consideration of these issues.

Sincerely,

Michelle Lujan Grisham
Member of Congress
First District of New Mexico